

Immanuel United Church  
October 9, 2022  
Thanksgiving Sunday

## **Welcome & Announcements**

### **Lighting of the Christ Candle**

The candle is lit as a reminder of the light of Christ  
**Given to us all,**  
A symbol of God's presence  
**Each and every day.**

### **Call to Worship:**

Thanksgiving for the harvest.  
**Thanksgiving all year.**  
Thanksgiving for the world that surrounds us.  
**Thanksgiving for all that god has provided.**  
Thanksgiving for the things that are seen and unseen.  
**Thanksgiving for Jesus and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.**  
Praise God today in this worship service.  
**Praise the name of God.**  
Lift your hearts and minds to the voice of our Creator.  
**We allow the spirit of God to envelop and surround  
us as we come together in this holy place.**  
Give God the glory.  
**Give God all our thanks.**

**Hymn: VU#222                      Come, Let Us Sing**

### **Opening Prayer**

Dear God, as we come before you today on this Thanksgiving Sunday, we realize that we take many things for granted. Help us to stop and remember. Help us to find the source of our very being. Give us thankful hearts today and each day of the year. All that we have we owe to you and the great bounty you have given so freely. We are nourished and we are strengthened by the material goods as well as the spiritual goods that are provided. Our needs are met because of you. Help us to share these wonderful blessings with all we meet as we continue our journey together. **Amen**

**Hymn: VU#236                      Now Thank We All Our God**

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 26:1-11  
Philippians 4:4-9

**Choir Anthem                      Give Thanks**

## **Sermon – Sources and Transitions**

Thanksgiving is a very big day in our culture. When we think about the first thanksgiving, I'm sure that we see images of Pilgrims, the harvest and pumpkins. I didn't want to rely on this memory, so I went to our old friend, Wikipedia to get a bit of background information. I found the following resources that covers the origins of thanksgiving in the English, Canadian and American traditions.

In the English tradition, days of thanksgiving and special thanksgiving religious services became important during the English Reformation in the reign of Henry VIII. Wow, I didn't know it was that far back.

According to some historians, the first celebration of Thanksgiving in North America occurred during the 1578 voyage of Martin Frobisher from England in search of the Northwest Passage. Other researchers, however, state that "there is no compelling narrative of the origins of the Canadian Thanksgiving Day."

Antecedents for Canadian Thanksgiving are also sometimes traced to the French settlers who came to New France in the 17th century, who celebrated their successful harvests. The French settlers in the area typically had feasts at the end of the harvest season. They continued throughout the winter season...I did not know that the French settlers did this.

The annual Thanksgiving holiday tradition in the United States is documented at its earliest in 1619, in what is now called the Commonwealth of Virginia.

If we skip ahead to 2022, I've noticed that our generation has been encouraged to keep a gratitude journal. I think a gratitude journal is a great idea. We need these reminders every few years that being grateful is important.

However, our generation or even the generation living during the reign of Henry VIII did not invent thanksgiving. We read today from the book of Deuteronomy. It was believed to have been written by Moses. The portion that we read today was after the great Exodus from Egypt. The Israelites had been freed from their oppressor and they were in a land flowing with milk and honey. Life was good and because of all that God had provided, Moses was instructing his people to give back to their Creator the first fruits of their labour in a spirit of thanksgiving. They were to go to the priest with this basket of first fruits. They were to respond before God that the wandering Aramean was their ancestor who later became a great nation. The first fruits were then set before the lord in thanksgiving. First fruit – not second best, the first was to be given to God.

There are many things packed into this passage from Deuteronomy. My first question was who was the wandering Aramean? The wandering Aramean was Abraham who was the father of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. His children went on to build great nations that are part of our world today. But before any of this happened, the scripture says that Abraham lived in Egypt as an alien. They were outsiders in a foreign land and, much like the lives of refugees, they did not have a place to call their own.

The journey of a refugee is never straightforward. There are often twists and turns in the story. There are periods of being in limbo, of being lost, of not belonging anywhere. In the case of the Israelites in Egypt, they were slave labour. Refugees have been a part of Canada since the beginning. People have come here from all over the world to seek a better life without war, hunger, poverty, and religious persecution. And like the Israelites, some have worked long, hard hours for next to nothing.

On a personal note, my great, great, great grandmother was Acadian. Her family moved to Cape Breton from France before Marie-Henriette Lejeune Ross was born but were sent back by the British. They tried again after Marie-Henriette was born but were sent back to France again. They tried once more and succeeded a third time when my ancestor was a young married woman. After her first two husbands died, she married my great, great, great grandfather, James Ross. She eventually was known as Granny Ross and became a healer, a mid-wife, an end-of-life caregiver. She transitioned her misfortunes and lived to 98, dying in 1860.

The life of a refugee is full of changes. Going to live somewhere new is not a smooth transition. The great nation that arose from Father Abraham did not happen overnight. The transition was years in the making. Moses knew how important it was to acknowledge this history, this source, this man, Abraham who had paved the way for the people of Israel.

Abraham and his children transitioned into great nations. Moses transitioned from a baby in the bulrushes to a great leader of the Israelites after a long and arduous path from Egyptian slavery to a nation of strong people.

Transitions can happen for us as well. You know that saying, you are what you eat. I think it's also true that we become what we think. Turning to scripture again, Paul encourages the Philippians to learn from his teaching which includes a new way of thinking. What do we think about? It's not always pretty. Do we think of things that are true, honourable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent or anything worthy of praise? That's a tall order. This is where a gratitude journal might come in handy. And yet we worry. We worry because, quite frankly, there's a lot to worry about.

However, as we learn to rest in the knowledge of the Abrahams from our lives; those who depended on God to see them through; those who found peace that surpasses all understanding that guarded their hearts, we find that just maybe we can let go. It's very difficult to control our thoughts and changing the way we think is not achieved by slapping ourselves on the wrist every time we think a negative thought. Perhaps over time we realize that there are some things we can control and the rest we leave with God. We transition into people who give thanks for all our gifts. We transition into people who give back to our community. We find ways to think on the things that are commendable.

Abraham wanted a better life for both himself and his people. Everyone wants that and in recognition of this journey, Moses led his people to a place of gratitude. What of our own people? Moses led the people of Israel away from their oppressor, the Egyptians. Who will lead our people away from poverty and substandard conditions? Food, clothing, and shelter

are basic human rights. Everyone should be equipped with everything they need to survive and yet our land flowing with milk and honey has pockets that are dry. Why? Why are people living without? It's not as if there's not enough. Thankful, yes thankful and giving of the first fruits. The best is given away. No one is left wanting. All are provided for.

We look to our ancestors and people like Abraham as sources of inspiration as wonderful examples to follow on our spiritual journey. Those greats who have paved the way are much to be praised. But, as the popular saying goes, at the end of the day, the thanks belongs to our true source. God made us and we are God's. We belong to God. Rejoice in that knowledge. We take a deep breath and remember that God surrounds us and provides a better way.

What is our source? What have we turned into? Has God magically transformed us? Do we grow in God's love? Do we worship the source of all that we are? Praise and thanksgiving. Make a joyful noise.

Have you ever noticed how magical God is? I mean nothing stays in its original state. Life around us is constantly changing. We can be thankful for the things we have, but we can also be thankful for the ability to become the people that God wants us to be. I always find it amazing when you haven't seen kids over the summer, and when they appear in the fall, they look as if they've grown six inches. That is miraculous. In case there are those who don't believe in miracles. We see it all the time, it has become part of our lives. We live surrounded by miracles of transition.

What are we becoming? What have we become? A small kernel of corn can turn into a delicious bowl of popcorn. A piece of wood can turn into a wonderful book to read. The transition from the source. We remember those who have gone before and have been blessed by God in their struggles, reminding us that we too are blessed by God.

Today we celebrate our source and our sustainer. We celebrate the many transitions that have occurred in our lives. We celebrate who we have become and who we are becoming. We celebrate the God who makes it all possible.

God has provided us many beautiful things in creation. God has provided us with the best, the first fruits. We are thankful and, in that gratitude, it is our responsibility to take care of our gifts. If we are given a present, like a book, for our birthday, do we throw that book around, tear out a couple of pages, make scratches on it, pour grease on it? No, we protect this book. It was a gift.

Today, as we focus on the relationship we have with our Divine Parent, we remember that as recipients of this love we have this amazing opportunity to transition into the people that God intended that we be. As in the days of Moses, I pray that we come before God, remember our source, and thankfully offer our first fruits. Amen.

**Hymn: MV#182**

**Grateful**

## **Offering**

**Offertory: VU#540            Grant Us, God, the Grace**

## **Offering Prayer**

## **Prayers of the People**

## **Prayer of Jesus**

**Hymn: VU#964            Go Now in Peace**  
**Go now in peace, go now in peace.**  
**may the love of God surround you**  
**everywhere, everywhere you may go.**

## **Commissioning and Benediction**

With God's blessing we go from this place. We renew our commitment to serve God, impart the love of Jesus and walk with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

Know that God's presence is always with us. We are indeed never alone. May the peace and love that is God continue to be with us on our journey. Amen